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U.S. APPLICATION NO. (If known, see 37 CFR 1.5

10/018143

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO.

INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE

PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED

PCT/EP00/05515

June 15, 2000

June 16, 1999

TITLE OF INVENTION

APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR COATING AN OPTICALLY READABLE DATA CARRIER

APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US Björn Liedtke, Joachim Gordt, Ulrich Speer,
James Wise, and Hans-Gerd Esser

Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information:

1. ☒ This is a **FIRST** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
2. ☐ This is a **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
3. ☒ This is an express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)). The submission must include items (5), (6), (9) and (21) indicated below.
4. ☒ The US has been elected by the expiration of 19 months from the priority date (Article 31).
5. ☒ A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2))
 - a. ☐ is attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau).
 - b. ☒ has been communicated by the International Bureau.
 - c. ☐ is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US).
6. ☒ An English language translation of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)).
 - a. ☒ is attached hereto.
 - b. ☐ has been previously submitted under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).
7. ☐ Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3))
 - a. ☐ are attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau).
 - b. ☐ have been communicated by the International Bureau.
 - c. ☐ have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired.
 - d. ☐ have not been made and will not be made.
8. ☐ An English language translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371 (c)(3)).
9. ☐ An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(4)).
10. ☐ An English language translation of the annexes of the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(5)).

Items 11 to 20 below concern document(s) or information included:

11. ☐ An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98.
12. ☐ An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included.
13. ☒ A **FIRST** preliminary amendment.
14. ☐ A **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** preliminary amendment.
15. ☐ A substitute specification.
16. ☐ A change of power of attorney and/or address letter.
17. ☐ A computer-readable form of the sequence listing in accordance with PCT Rule 13ter.2 and 35 U.S.C. 1.821 - 1.825.
18. ☐ A second copy of the published international application under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).
19. ☐ A second copy of the English language translation of the international application under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).
20. ☐ Other items or information:

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I hereby certify that this paper or fee is being deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 CFR 1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to the Commissioner of patents and trademarks, Washington, D.C. 20231.

Rosalie A. Centeno

Rosalie A. Centeno

U.S. APPLICATION NO. (if known, see 37 CFR 1.5) 10/018143		INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. PCT/EP00/05515		ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER AZ.3025	
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21. ☒ The following fees are submitted:

BASIC NATIONAL FEE (37 CFR 1.492 (a) (1) - (5)):

Neither international preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) nor international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO and International Search Report not prepared by the EPO or JPO..... \$1040.00

International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but International Search Report prepared by the EPO or JPO\$890.00

International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO \$740.00

International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO but all claims did not satisfy provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) \$710.00

International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO and all claims satisfied provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) \$100.00

ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT =

Surcharge of \$130.00 for furnishing the oath or declaration later than ☐ 20 ☐ 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(e)).

CLAIMS	NUMBER FILED	NUMBER EXTRA	RATE	\$	
Total claims	33 - 20 =	13	x \$18.00	\$	234.00
Independent claims	3 - 3 =	0	x \$84.00	\$	
MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM(S) (if applicable)			+ \$280.00	\$	
TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS =				\$	1124.00

☐ Applicant claims small entity status. See 37 CFR 1.27. The fees indicated above are reduced by 1/2.

SUBTOTAL =

Processing fee of \$130.00 for furnishing the English translation later than ☐ 20 ☐ 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(f)).

TOTAL NATIONAL FEE =

Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.21(h)). The assignment must be accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet (37 CFR 3.28, 3.31). \$40.00 per property +

TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED =

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CALCULATIONS PTO USE ONLY

a. ☒ A check in the amount of \$ 1124.00 to cover the above fees is enclosed.

b. ☐ Please charge my Deposit Account No. _____ in the amount of \$ _____ to cover the above fees. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

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NOTE: Where an appropriate time limit under 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 has not been met, a petition to revive (37 CFR 1.137 (a) or (b)) must be filed and granted to restore the application to pending status.

SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:

ROBERT W. BECKER & ASSOCIATES
11896 N. HIGHWAY 14 SUITE B
TIJERAS, NEW MEXICO 87059

Robert W. Becker
SIGNATURE

Robert W. Becker
NAME

26,255
REGISTRATION NUMBER

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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Rosalie A. Centeno
Rosalie A. Centeno, Secretary

In the Application of Björn Liedtke, et al

Ser.No.: Not Yet Known (Based on PCT/EP00/05515 filed June 15, 2000 and German priority documents 199 27 515.7 filed 16 June 1999 and 100 29 399.9 filed 15 June 2000)

For: APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR COATING AN OPTICALLY READABLE DATA CARRIER

Filed on: December 14, 2001

Assistant Commissioner for Patents

Washington, DC 20231

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT ACCOMPANYING PCT NATIONAL STAGE APPLICATION

Sir:

Prior to examination, please amend the above-identified application as follows.

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

On page 1, immediately after the title, please insert the following heading:

--Background of the Invention--.

On page 2, at line 1, please insert the following heading:

--Summary of the Invention--.

On page 5, between lines 12 and 13, please insert the following heading:

--Brief Description of the Drawing--;

On page 6, between lines 2 and 3, please insert the following heading:

--Description of Preferred Embodiments--.

On page 13, after line 21, please insert the following paragraph:

--The specification incorporates by reference the disclosure of German priority documents 199 27 515.7 filed 16 June 1999 and 100 29 399.9 filed 15 June 2000 and PCT/EP00/05515 filed June 15, 2000.

The present invention is, of course, in no way restricted to the specific disclosure of the specification and drawings, but also encompasses any modifications within the scope of the appended claims.--

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1 - 36, and replace them with the attached claims 37 - 69.

REMARKS

Claims 37 - 69 are pending in the application.

Appropriate headings have been added to the specification, and claims from the literal translation have been replaced by claims drafted in conformity with U.S. Patent practice.

The application in its amended state is believed to be in condition for allowance. However, should the Examiner have any comments or suggestions, or wish to discuss the merits of the application, the undersigned would very much welcome a telephone call in order to expedite placement of the application into condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert W. Becker

Robert W. Becker, Reg. No. 26,255
for Applicant(s)

ROBERT W. BECKER & ASSOCIATES
11896 N. Highway 14, Suite B
Tijeras, New Mexico 87059

Telephone: (505) 286-3511
Facsimile: (505) 286-3524

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37. A method of coating an optically readable data carrier,
including the step of:

applying a transparent adhesive film to a data carrier surface
that is to be protected, wherein said adhesive film is provided with
adhesive on one side.

38. A method according to claim 37, which includes the step
of withdrawing said adhesive film from a carrier film during or after
application of said adhesive film to said data carrier surface.

39. A method according to claim 37, which includes the step
of withdrawing a protective film from said adhesive film prior to
application of said adhesive film to said data carrier surface.

40. A method according to claim 37, wherein a shape and
size of said adhesive film corresponds to said data carrier surface.

41. A method according to claim 40, wherein sections of said
adhesive film that correspond to a shape and size of said data carrier
surface are punched onto a carrier film.

42. A method according to claim 37, wherein said adhesive
film is applied to said data carrier surface in a centered manner.

43. A method according to claim 42, wherein said adhesive
film and said data carrier surface are aligned with one another prior to
said applying step.

44. A method according to claim 37, wherein during said applying step said adhesive film is pressed against said data carrier surface via a rotating pressure roller.

45. A method according to claim 44, which includes the step of controlling a pressure of said pressure roller.

46. A method according to claim 44, wherein prior to being pressed by said pressure roller, said adhesive film is held at a pre-specified angle relative to said data carrier surface.

47. A method according to claim 44, wherein said pressure roller and said data carrier surface are moved relative to one another.

48. A method according to claim 47, wherein said data carrier surface is moved linearly past said pressure roller.

49. A method according to claim 47, wherein said pressure roller is rotated synchronously to a relative movement of said data carrier surface.

50. A method according to claim 37, wherein said adhesive film is a layer of adhesive material without carrier material.

51. A method according to claim 50, wherein said adhesive film is hardened via at least one of pressure, time, UV radiation and thermal treatment.

52. A method according to claim 37, wherein a transparent protective layer, especially a PC tape, is applied to a non-adhesive side of said adhesive film.

53. A method according to claim 37, wherein said adhesive film is an adhesive film that responds to pressure, and wherein the adhesion characteristics of said adhesive film vary as a function of pressure.

54. An apparatus for coating an optically readable data carrier, comprising:

a laminating station for applying a transparent adhesive film to a data carrier surface that is to be protected, wherein said adhesive film is provided with adhesive on one side.

55. An apparatus according to claim 54, wherein a shape and size of said adhesive film correspond to said data carrier surface.

56. An apparatus according to claim 54, wherein sections of said adhesive film that correspond to a shape and size of said data carrier surface are punched onto a carrier film.

57. An apparatus according to claim 54, wherein said laminating station is provided with an aligning unit for aligning said adhesive film with said data carrier surface.

58. An apparatus according to claim 54, wherein said laminating station is provided with a rotatable pressure roller.

59. An apparatus according to claim 58, wherein said laminating station is provided with a device for moving at least one of said pressure roller and said data carrier surface.

60. An apparatus according to claim 59, wherein said device is provided with at least one linear movement unit for said data carrier surface.

61. An apparatus according to claim 54, which includes a device for withdrawing a protective film from said adhesive film.

62. An apparatus according to claim 54, wherein said adhesive film is provided with a protective layer, especially a PC tape, on a non-adhesive side thereof.

63. An apparatus according to claim 54, which includes a device for hardening said adhesive film.

64. An apparatus according to claim 53, wherein said device for hardening said adhesive film is provided with an irradiation unit or a thermal treatment unit.

65. An optically readable data carrier comprising:
a transparent protective layer in the form of an adhesive film that is provided with an adhesive on one side.

66. A data carrier according to claim 65, wherein said adhesive film is a layer of adhesive material without carrier material.

67. A data carrier according to claim 65, wherein a protective layer, especially a PC tape, is provided on a non-adhesive side of said adhesive film.

68. A data carrier according to claim 65, wherein said adhesive film can be hardened.

69. A data carrier according to claim 65, which includes a protective housing, and wherein said data carrier is disposed in said protective housing.

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37. A method of coating an optically readable data carrier, including the step of:

applying a transparent adhesive ²⁵film to a data carrier surface that is to be protected, wherein said adhesive film is provided with adhesive on one side.

38. A method according to claim 37, which includes the step of withdrawing said adhesive ²⁵film from a carrier ²⁶film during or after application of said adhesive film to said data carrier surface.

39. A method according to claim 37, which includes the step of withdrawing a protective film from said adhesive ²⁵film prior to application of said adhesive film to said data carrier surface.

40. A method according to claim 37, wherein a shape and size of said adhesive ²⁵film corresponds to said data carrier surface.

41. A method according to claim 40, wherein sections ²⁷of said adhesive ²⁵film that correspond to a shape and size of said data carrier surface are punched onto a carrier ²⁶film.

42. A method according to claim 37, wherein said adhesive ²⁵film is applied to said data carrier surface in a centered manner.

43. A method according to claim 42, wherein said adhesive ²⁵film and said data carrier surface are aligned with one another prior to said applying step.

* For Examiner's reference

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44. A method according to claim 37, wherein during said applying step said adhesive ²⁵film is pressed against said data carrier surface via a rotating pressure ³³roller.

5 45. A method according to claim 44, which includes the step of controlling a pressure of said pressure ³³roller.

46. A method according to claim 44, wherein prior to being pressed by said pressure ³³roller, said adhesive ²⁵film is held at a pre-specified angle relative to said data carrier surface.

10 47. A method according to claim 44, wherein said pressure ³³roller and said data carrier surface are moved relative to one another.

48. A method according to claim 47, wherein said data carrier surface is moved linearly past said pressure ³³roller.

15 49. A method according to claim 47, wherein said pressure ³³roller is rotated synchronously to a relative movement of said data carrier surface.

50. A method according to claim 37, wherein said adhesive ²⁵film is a layer of adhesive material without carrier material.

20 51. A method according to claim 50, wherein said adhesive ²⁵film is hardened via at least one of pressure, time, UV radiation and thermal treatment.

52. A method according to claim 37, wherein a transparent protective layer, especially a PC tape, is applied to a non-adhesive side of said adhesive ²⁵film.

53. A method according to claim 37, wherein said adhesive ²⁵ film is an adhesive film that responds to pressure, and wherein the adhesion characteristics of said adhesive film vary as a function of pressure.

5 54. An apparatus for coating an optically readable data carrier, comprising:

a laminating station ⁷ for applying a transparent adhesive ²⁵ film to a data carrier surface that is to be protected, wherein said adhesive film is provided with adhesive on one side.

10 55. An apparatus according to claim 54, wherein a shape and size of said adhesive ²⁵ film correspond to said data carrier surface.

56. An apparatus according to claim 54, wherein sections of said adhesive ²⁵ film that correspond to a shape and size of said data carrier surface are punched onto a carrier ²⁶ film. ²⁷

15 57. An apparatus according to claim 54, wherein said laminating station ⁷ is provided with an aligning unit for aligning said adhesive ²⁵ film with said data carrier surface.

58. An apparatus according to claim 54, wherein said laminating station is provided with a rotatable pressure ³³ roller.

20 59. An apparatus according to claim 58, wherein said laminating station ⁷ is provided with a device for moving at least one of said pressure ³³ roller and said data carrier surface.

60. An apparatus according to claim 59, wherein said device is provided with at least one linear movement unit⁴⁷ for said data carrier surface.

5 61. An apparatus according to claim 54, which includes a device for withdrawing a protective film²⁴ from said adhesive film²⁵.

62. An apparatus according to claim 54, wherein said adhesive film²⁵ is provided with a protective layer, especially a PC tape, on a non-adhesive side thereof.

10 63. An apparatus according to claim 54, which includes a device for hardening said adhesive film²⁵.

64. An apparatus according to claim 53, wherein said device for hardening said adhesive film²⁵ is provided with an irradiation unit or a thermal treatment unit.

15 65. An optically readable data carrier comprising:
a transparent protective layer in the form of an adhesive film that is provided with an adhesive on one side.

66. A data carrier according to claim 65, wherein said adhesive film²⁵ is a layer of adhesive material without carrier material.

20 67. A data carrier according to claim 65, wherein a protective layer, especially a PC tape, is provided on a non-adhesive side of said adhesive film²⁵.

68. A data carrier according to claim 65, wherein said adhesive film²⁵ can be hardened.

69. A data carrier according to claim 65, which includes a protective housing, and wherein said data carrier is disposed in said protective housing.

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Apparatus and Method for Coating an Optically Readable Data Carrier

The present invention relates to an apparatus and a method for coating an optically readable data carrier, as well as to an optically readable data carrier.

5 Optical data carriers, such as CDs, as well as methods and apparatus for producing the same, are known. Such data carriers generally have a data-carrying surface that must be protected from environmental conditions. To protect the surface, a hardening lacquer was used in the past that was applied to a central region of the rapidly
10 rotating data carrier so that it would flow outwardly due to centrifugal force and would form an essentially uniform layer upon the CD. However, in this connection the data carrier must be rotated at a high speed in order to produce adequate centrifugal forces for a uniform distribution of the lacquer upon the surface that is to be protected. This
15 process has the inherent danger of damaging the data carrier. Furthermore, with this method excess lacquer is flung out from the data carrier, and must subsequently be removed in a complicated and expensive process.

20 EP-A-0 855 703 furthermore discloses a method for gluing together two essentially equal, disk-like substrates of a data carrier using an adhesive film that has adhesive on both sides.

Starting with this method, it is an object of the present invention to provide a simplified and economical method for coating an optically readable data carrier as well as a data carrier produced in this manner.

This object is inventively realized for a method for coating an optically readable data carrier in that a transparent adhesive film that is provided with adhesive on one side is applied to a data carrier surface that is to be protected. The use of an adhesive film has the advantage that the aforementioned centrifuging process for coating the data carrier with a lacquer is eliminated, and no flung-off residual lacquer, which must be removed in an expensive and complicated manner, results. The adhesive film furthermore provides a simple and economical solution for the coating of a data carrier.

In accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention, during or after its application to the data carrier the adhesive film is withdrawn from a carrier film. The carrier film has the advantage that the film is protected prior to its application to the data carrier, and the adhesive film has an adequate stability for transport. In addition, a protective film is preferably withdrawn from the adhesive film prior to applying the adhesive film to the data carrier, the protective film protecting the adhesive film surface that is adhesive on one side from contamination and damage prior to its application.

In order to completely cover the data carrier, the shape and size of the adhesive film advantageously correspond to the surface of the data carrier surface that is to be protected. Sections of the adhesive film that correspond to the shape and size of the data carrier are advantageously punched onto the carrier film.

5 The adhesive film is preferably applied centered on the data carrier surface that is to be protected in order to ensure a uniform coating of all regions of the data carrier. For this purpose the adhesive film and the data carrier are preferably aligned with one another prior to application.

10 Pursuant to a further specific embodiment of the present invention, during the application the adhesive film is pressed onto the data carrier via a rotating pressure roller, which ensures a reliable contact between the adhesive film and the data carrier. In this connection, the pressure of the pressure roller is preferably controlled in order to achieve an optimum adhesive effect upon the surface of the data carrier.

15 Prior to pressing by the pressure roller, the adhesive film is preferably held at a pre-specified angle relative to the surface of the data carrier in order to hold the adhesive film at a distance from the data carrier, and to ensure a controlled pressing only in the region of the pressure roller. This prevents air from being trapped between the adhesive film and the surface of the data carrier.

20 Pursuant to a preferred specific embodiment of the present invention, the data carrier and the pressure roller are moved relative to one another in order to enable a continuing application of the adhesive film upon the surface of the data carrier. In this connection, the data carrier is advantageously moved past the pressure roller linearly, and the pressure roller is advantageously rotated synchronously with the

movement of the data carrier in order to continuously press the adhesive film onto the data carrier.

In one embodiment of the present invention, after the adhesive film has been applied to the optical data carrier, it is hardened in order to provide an increased strength and hence an improved protection of the optical data carrier. In this connection, the adhesive film is preferably hardened by means of a thermal treatment and/or pressure and/or time. Pursuant to an alternative embodiment of the present invention, the adhesive film is advantageously hardened by UV radiation.

A transparent protective layer, in particular a so-called PC-tape, is preferably applied to that side of the adhesive film that is not adhered with the data carrier.

The object of the present invention is also realized by an apparatus of coating an optically readable data carrier, and includes a laminating station for applying a transparent adhesive film having adhesive on one side to a data carrier surface that is to be protected. With such an apparatus, the advantages mentioned above with regard to the method are achieved. In particular, with such an apparatus there is eliminated the danger of damage to the data carrier due to the centrifuging process, and in addition there is eliminated the complicated and expensive preparation and removal of residual lacquer that is flung off.

The object is furthermore realized by an optically readable data carrier having a transparent protective layer, according to which the protective layer is an adhesive film having adhesive on one side. The use of a transparent adhesive film having adhesive on one side as a protective layer leads to the advantages already described above. Pursuant to a presently preferred specific embodiment of the present invention, the data carrier is disposed in a protective housing that surrounds the data carrier. By using a protective housing, the requirements placed upon the protective layer are significantly reduced, since this layer does not have to restrain strong stresses, but rather serves chiefly as a protective layer against contamination and chemical influences.

The present invention is explained in greater detail in the following using preferred exemplary embodiments with reference to the figures, in which:

Fig. 1 is a schematic representation of an apparatus for producing optical data carriers in accordance with the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a schematic view of parts of a laminating station in accordance with the present invention;

Fig. 3 is a side view of an alternative embodiment of a laminating station in accordance with the present invention;

Figs. 4 is a schematic side view of an alternative adhesive film.

Figure 1 illustrates an apparatus 1 for producing an optical data carrier having at least one surface that is to be protected

5 The apparatus has a feed unit 3 for feeding an optical data carrier, such as a CD or a DVR. The data carrier 6 from the first feed station 3 is conveyed to a laminating station 7 that is described in greater detail with reference to Figures 2 and 3. In the laminating station, a pressure-sensitive adhesive tape or film which has adhesive on one side and is known as PSA tape, is applied to the surface of the optical data carrier 6 that is to be protected. The terms adhesive tape and adhesive film are to be understood as a layer of an adhesive without a carrier material. The optical properties of a layer of adhesive can generally be controlled more precisely and better than those of a coated carrier material. The adhesive film has varying adhesion properties as a function of the pressure applied to it. The data carrier is subsequently placed upon a rotary table 8 having a centering and holding device.

10 The rotary table is subsequently rotated further until it is disposed in a processing station 11 in which the adhesive film located on the data carrier is hardened. The rotary table is then rotated into an unloading position, where the optical data carrier is removed.

20 The apparatus 1 is arranged in a clean room in which each of the work steps can be performed under clean room conditions.

Figures 2 and 3 are schematic representations of a laminating station 7 in accordance with the present invention, whereby the components of the laminating stations 7 illustrated in Figures 2 and 3 are arranged somewhat differently. However, the same reference numbers are used for identical/similar components in the following description of the laminating station in accordance with Figures 2 and 3.

The laminating station 7 has a feed roller 22 on which a tape-like laminating film 23 is rolled. The laminating film 23 comprises a total of three films, namely, a protective film 24, an adhesive film 25 that is adhesive on one side, and a carrier film 26, as can be best seen in the enlarged circular detail in Figure 2. The adhesive film 25 has sections 27 that are punched corresponding to the size and shape of a surface of the data carrier 6 that is to be coated.

The laminating station furthermore has a take-up roller 28 on which the remainder of the laminating film 23 is taken up after a laminating process. The laminating film 23 is conducted between the feed roller 22 and the take-up roller 28 around a plurality of guide rollers 30 through 38 in order to provide a defined path for the tape-like laminating film 23 between the rollers 22 and 28. Each of the rollers 30 through 38 is rotatable about its axis of rotation, and the rollers 31 and 37 are designed as so-called compensating rollers that are borne movable in the horizontal direction in order to make it possible to compensate for the length of the laminating film 23 between the rollers

22 and 28. This makes it possible for the rollers 22 and 28 to be rotated at a constant speed despite discontinuous laminating cycles, as will be described in the following. The parts of the adhesive film 25 that are not needed can be removed in advance, that is, prior to introducing the laminating film into the laminating station, for instance during production of the laminating film, or they can remain on the film in order to ensure a uniform thickness of the film 23 across the entire width and length thereof, at least prior to a laminating process.

The laminating film 23 is furthermore conducted around a wedge-shaped blade 40, where the laminating film 23 turns sharply in order to make it possible to remove the protective film 24 from the laminating film 23 so that the adhesive side of the adhesive film 25 is exposed for adhering with the optical data carrier 6. The removal of the protective film 24 is best seen in Figure 3. Once removed, the protective film 24 is rolled onto a roller (not shown in greater detail). An alternative type of film removal device could also be used instead of the wedge-shaped blade 40.

Once the laminating film 23 has been conducted around the blade 40, it is conducted around the roller 33 that is lower with respect to a horizontal and that is embodied as a pressure roller. After the roller 33, the laminating film 23 is conducted about the shaft 34, which is driven via a motor 42.

Rotation of the driven roller 34 causes corresponding rotation of the pressure roller 33 and a downstream roller 35 that is embodied purely as a guide roller.

5 The laminating station 7 has a first sensor 45 that is associated with the driven roller 34 and that is able to detect contours in the punched sections 27 of the adhesive film 25. The laminating film 23 is moved back and forth in the longitudinal direction via the driven roller 34 until the sensor 45 detects a certain contour of the punched sections 27, such as for instance a punched center hole. When the
10 sensor 45 detects the center hole, it is positioned directly over one edge of the center hole by the movement of the film, this resulting in precise alignment of the section 27 with respect to the roller 34 and in particular the pressure roller 33 in the longitudinal direction of the laminating film 23.

15 The laminating station 7 furthermore has a support and transport unit 47 for the data carrier 6 to be laminated. The support and transport unit 47 forms a horizontal support for the data carrier 6 and can be moved in any direction via suitable moving apparatus (not shown in greater detail). A lowerable centering pin 48 ensures precise
20 alignment of the data carrier 6 on the support and transport unit 47. The pin 48 can be lowered during the laminating process so that it is not impaired. This is achieved in that it is pressed upward into the position shown in Figure 3 by a spring with relatively limited spring force. When pressure is exerted on the pin from above, it is pressed

downward against the spring force. Alternatively, the pin can be moved via a cylinder or motor.

Prior to the lamination of the data carrier 6, the transport and support unit 47 is moved in the X direction, which corresponds to the longitudinal direction of the laminating film 23, against a stop. This ensures that the substrate 6 and the section 27 of the adhesive film 25 previously aligned in the longitudinal direction are aligned to one another. Then the transport and support unit 47 is moved back and forth in the Z direction, which runs transverse to the longitudinal direction of the laminating film 23. A sensor pair 50 allocated to the transport and support unit 47 detects a contour, such as for instance the contour of a center hole, of the punched section 27 of the adhesive film 25, which makes it possible to laterally align the data carrier 6 with respect to the section 27.

Once the data carrier 6 has been aligned in the above manner both in the X direction and in the Z direction with respect to the section 27 of the adhesive film 25, the transport and support unit 47 is raised in the Y direction. Now the motor 42 drives the roller 34, which causes the laminating film 23 to move in the X direction. At the same time and synchronized with the rotation, the transport and support unit 47 is moved in the X direction. The section 27 comes into contact with the surface of the data carrier 6 to be protected and is pressed thereagainst by the pressure roller 33 such that it adheres to the data carrier 6 and detaches from the carrier film 26. The synchronized

movement of the drive roller 34 with the transport and support unit 47 applies a section 27 of the adhesive film 25 centered on the data carrier 6 so that the section 27 of the film 25 completely covers the side of the data carrier 6 to be protected and does not project over the edge. The pressure of the pressure roller in the Y direction is controlled via the position of the transport and support unit 47 in order to control the adhesion properties of the pressure sensitive adhesive film 25. Alternatively, of course, the pressure roller 33 can move in the direction of the transport and support unit. A spring-type suspension system can be provided for good control or compensation of the pressure. The suspension can be provided via a spring or compressed air cylinder.

Then the data carrier 6 thus provided with the section 27 of adhesive film 25 is transported via a suitable handling apparatus 52, such as an interior hole gripper, removed from the transport and support unit 47, and is transported to the rotary table 8 in accordance with Figure 1.

A new data carrier 6 is loaded onto the transport and support unit 47, and the process is repeated. As was mentioned in the foregoing, the rollers 22 and 28 rotate continuously during the entire process, although the adhering process is discontinuous. The longitudinal compensation of the laminating film 23 that is therefore necessary is achieved via a horizontal movement of the compensating rollers 31 and 37, as already mentioned in the foregoing.

Although the laminating film has three layers in accordance with the description in the foregoing, namely a protective film 24, an adhesive film 25, and a carrier film 26, it should be noted that it is not absolutely necessary for there to be a protective film 24. However, if no protective film 24 is used, at least the rollers 30 and 32 should be specially coated in order to prevent the exposed adhesive film 25 from adhering to these rollers.

Alternatively, the guide rollers up to the roller 33 can be omitted, whereby in this case the rollers 22 and 28 must be controlled such that the sections 27 are aligned and a movement of the laminating film 23 is achieved synchronized with the transport and support unit 47.

In addition, a single sensor, such as for instance a camera, can be used for the above alignment processes instead of the sensors 45 and 50.

As described above, by means of the rotary table 8 the data carrier 6 is transported into the process station 11, in which the adhesive film is hardened.

Figure 4 shows an alternative embodiment of a band-shaped laminating film that can be utilized in the aforementioned laminating station. In Figure 4, the same reference numerals are utilized to the extent that they designate the same or similar elements. The laminating film 23 again comprises three films, namely a protective film 24, an adhesive film 25 having adhesive on one side, and a carrier film 26. In contrast to the previously described embodiment, the adhesive

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5 film does not comprise a single layer of adhesive material. Rather, the adhesive film 25, which has adhesive on one side, is built up of an adhesive layer 60 and a protective layer 62, such as, for example, a PC tape. By means of the PC tape, the adhesive film receives additional stability, and the PC tape furthermore has special optical characteristics that are of advantage, in particular, with a DVR. The adhesive film 25 has the previously described sections that are punched out in conformity with the size and shape of a data carrier surface that is to be adhered. With this type of adhesive film, the processing station 11 can be eliminated since a hardening of the adhesive film is not necessary.

10 The present invention was previously described with the aid of preferred exemplary embodiments of the invention, without, however, being limited to these special embodiments. For example, the data carrier can, in the manner of a diskette, be disposed within a housing that surrounds it, which greatly reduces the mechanical requirements made on the coating. In this case, the processing station 11 could be eliminated, since after the lamination of the adhesive foil (adhesive layer) no further processing step would be necessary. The hardening of the adhesive layer can be effected by pressure and/or time and/or by an irradiation, such as with UV light, or by a thermal treatment.

Patent claims

- 5 1. Method of coating an optically readable data carrier (6),
according to which a transparent adhesive film (25) that has
adhesive on one side is applied to a surface of the data carrier
(6) that is to be protected.
2. Method in accordance with claim 1, characterized in that said
adhesive film (25) is withdrawn from a carrier film (26) during or
after application to said data carrier (6).
- 10 3. Method in accordance with claim 1 or 2, characterized in that a
protective film is withdrawn from said adhesive film (25) prior to
its application to said data carrier (6).
4. Method in accordance with any of the preceding claims,
characterized in that the shape and size of said adhesive film
(25) corresponds to the surface of said data carrier (6) to be
15 protected.
5. Method in accordance with claim 4, characterized in that
sections (27) of said adhesive film (25) that correspond to the
shape and size of said data carrier (6) are punched onto said
carrier film (26).
- 20 6. Method in accordance with any of the preceding claims,
characterized in that said adhesive film (25) is applied centered
on the surface of said data carrier (6) to be protected.

7. Method in accordance with claim 6, characterized in that said adhesive film (25) and said data carrier (6) are aligned with one another prior to application.
8. Method in accordance with any of the preceding claims, characterized in that said adhesive film (25) is pressed onto said data carrier (6) during the application via a rotating pressure roller (33).
9. Method in accordance with claim 8, characterized in that the pressure of said pressure roller (33) is controlled.
10. Method in accordance with any of the preceding claims, characterized in that prior to pressing by said pressure roller (33) said adhesive film (25) is held at a pre-specified angle relative to the surface of said data carrier (6).
11. Method in accordance with any of the preceding claims, characterized in that the data carrier (6) and the pressure roller (33) are moved relative to one another.
12. Method in accordance with claim 11, characterized in that said data carrier (6) is moved past said pressure roller (33) linearly.
13. Method in accordance with claim 11 or 12, characterized in that said pressure roller (33) is rotated synchronously with the relative movement of said data carrier (6).
14. Method in accordance with any of the preceding claims, characterized in that the adhesive film (25) is a layer of adhesive material without carrier material.

15. Method in accordance with claim 14, characterized in that the adhesive film (25) is hardened with pressure and/or time.
16. Method in accordance with claim 15, characterized in that the adhesive film (25) is hardened via UV radiation.
- 5 17. Method in accordance with claim 15, characterized in that the adhesive film (25) is hardened by means of a thermal treatment.
18. Method in accordance with any of claims 1 to 13, characterized in that a transparent protective layer, in particular a PC tape, is applied to the non adhesive side of the adhesive film (25).
- 10 19. Method in accordance with any of the preceding claims, characterized in that the adhesive film (25) is an adhesive film that responds to pressure, the adhesion characteristics of which vary as a function of the pressure.
- 15 20. Apparatus for coating an optically readable data carrier (6) with a laminating station (7) for applying a transparent adhesive film (25) that is provided with adhesive on one side onto a surface of the data carrier (6) that is to be protected.
21. Apparatus in accordance with claim 20, characterized in that the shape and size of said adhesive film (25) correspond to the surface of said data carrier (6) that is to be protected.
- 20 22. Apparatus in accordance with either of claims 20 or 21, characterized in that sections (27) of said adhesive film (25) that correspond to the shape and size of said surface of the data

carrier (6) that is to be protected are punched onto a carrier film (26).

23. Apparatus in accordance with any of claims 20 to 22, characterized in that said laminating station (7) has an aligning unit for aligning said adhesive film (25) with the surface of said data carrier (6) to be protected.

24. Apparatus in accordance with any of claims 20 to 23, characterized in that the laminating station (7) has a rotatable pressure roller (33).

25. Apparatus in accordance with any of claims 20 to 24, characterized in that the laminating station (6) has a device for moving the data carrier (6) and/or the pressure roller (33).

26. Apparatus in accordance with any of claims 20 to 5, characterized in that the device has at least one linear movement unit (27) for the data carrier (6).

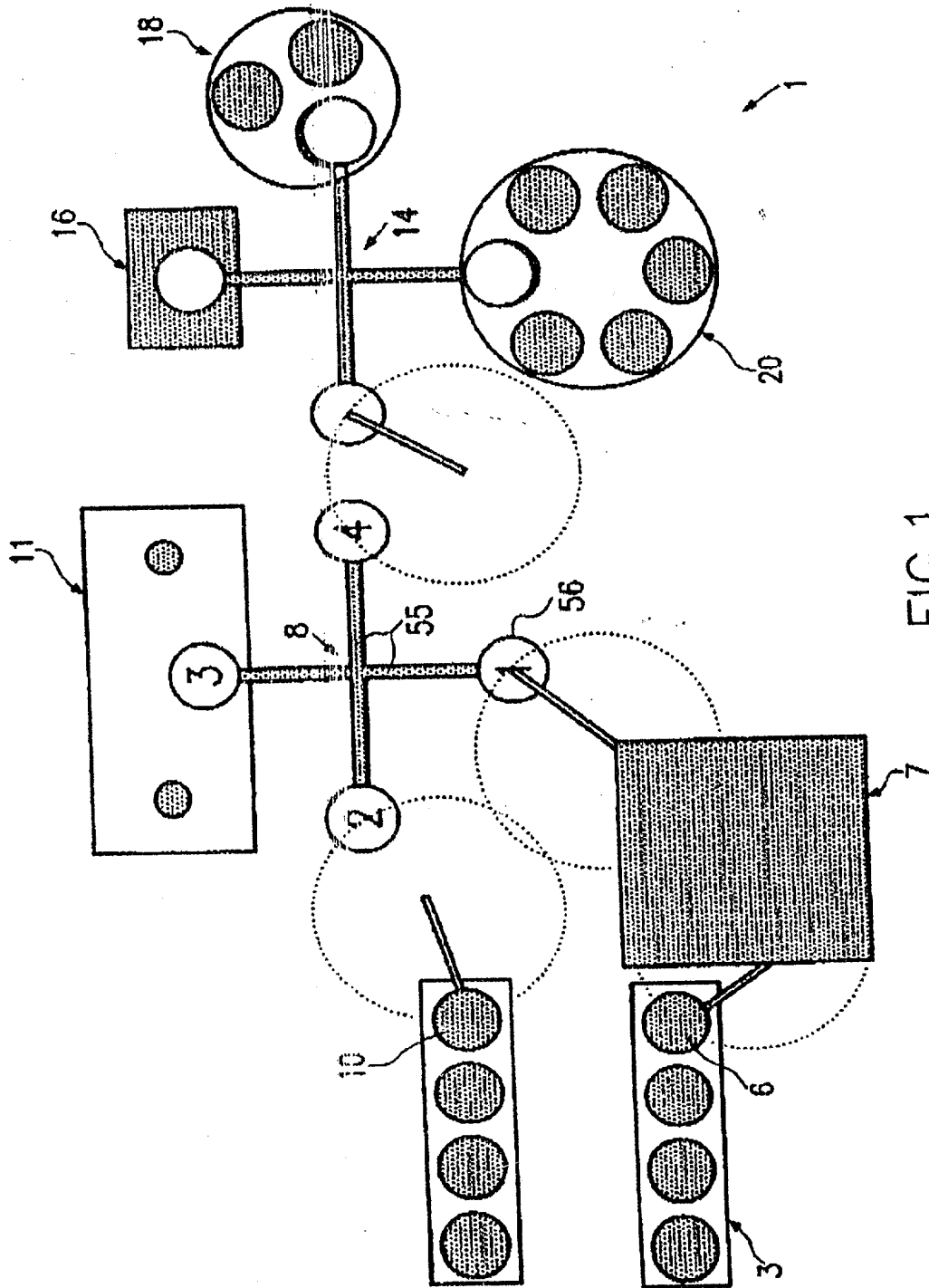
27. Apparatus in accordance with any of claims 20 to 26, characterized by a device for withdrawing a protective film (25) from the adhesive film.

28. Apparatus in accordance with any of claims 20 to 27, characterized in that the adhesive film (25) has a protective layer, in particular a PC tape, on its non adhesive side.

29. Apparatus in accordance with any of claims 20 to 27, characterized by a device for hardening the adhesive film (25).

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30. Apparatus in accordance with claim 29, characterized in that the device for hardening the adhesive film (25) has an irradiation unit.
31. Apparatus in accordance with claim 29, characterized in that the device for hardening the adhesive film (25) has a thermal treatment unit.
- 10
32. Optically readable data carrier (6) having a transparent protective layer, characterized in that the protective layer is an adhesive film (25) that is provided with adhesive on one side.
33. Data carrier in accordance with claim 32, characterized in that the adhesive film (25) is a layer of an adhesive material without carrier material.
- 15
34. Data carrier in accordance with claim 32, characterized in that a protective layer, in particular a PC tape, is provided on the non-adhesive side of the adhesive film.
35. Data carrier in accordance with claim 32 or 33, characterized in that the adhesive film (25) can be hardened.
- 20
36. Data carrier in accordance with any of claims 32 to 35, characterized in that the data carrier (6) is disposed in a protective housing.



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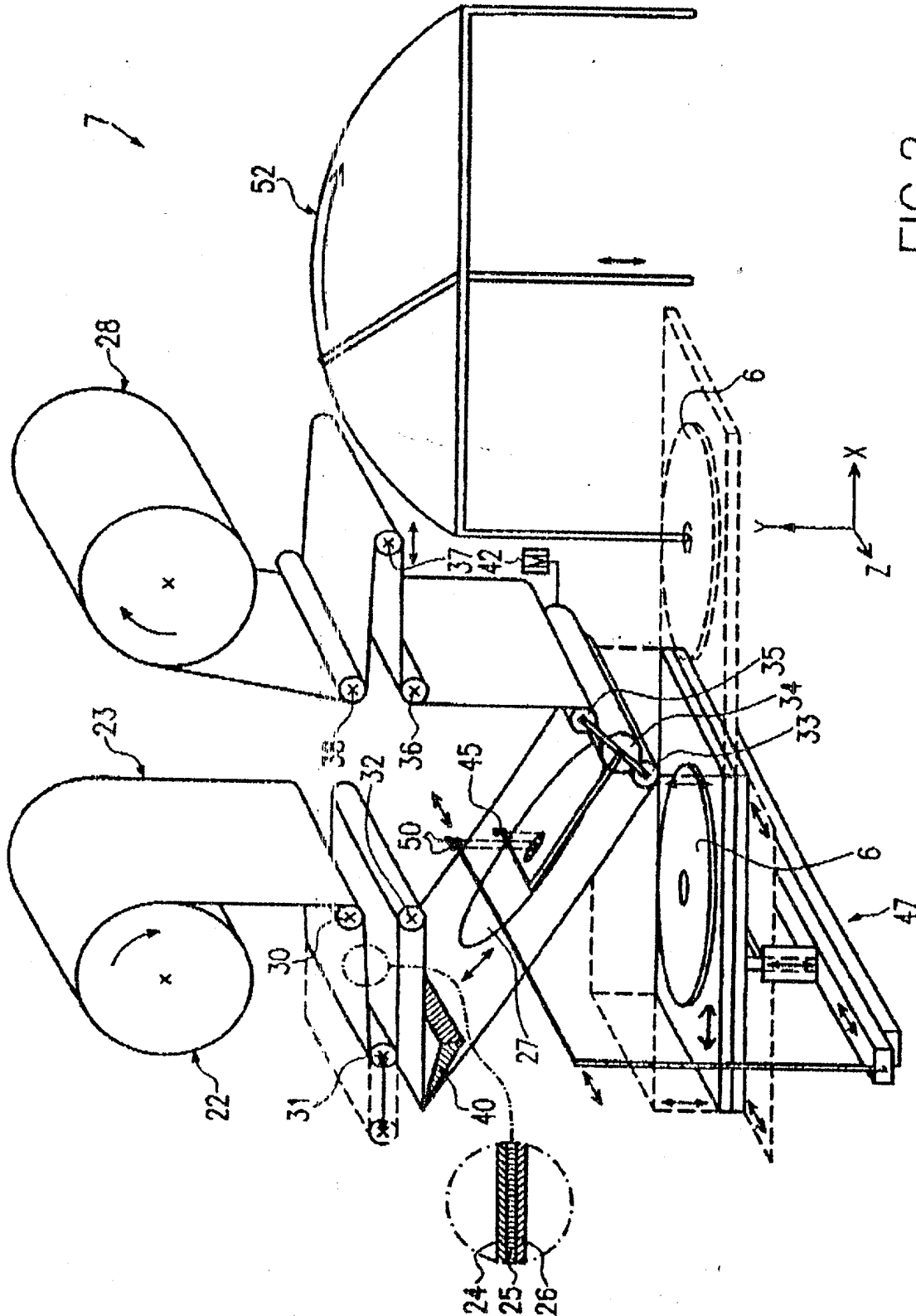


FIG.2

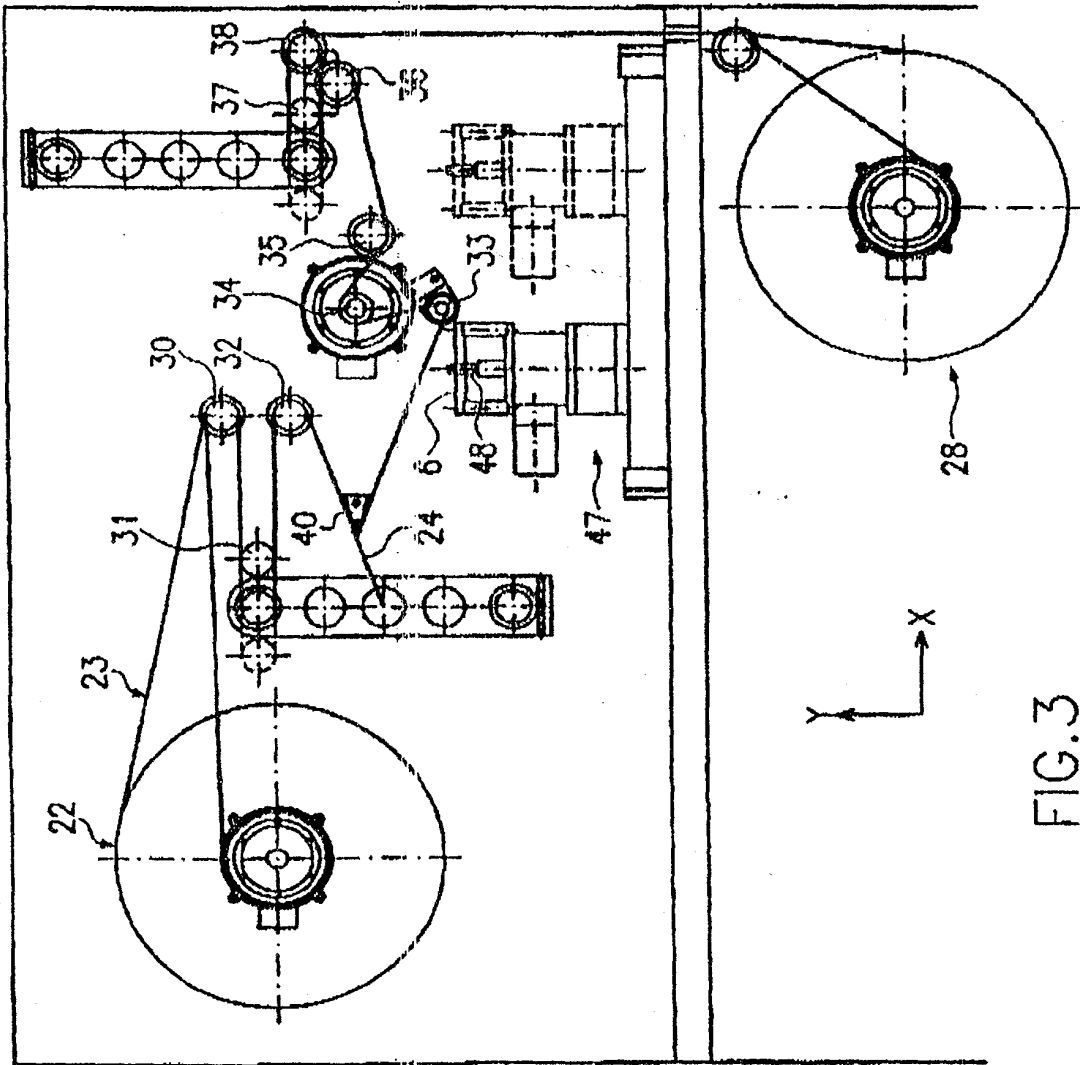
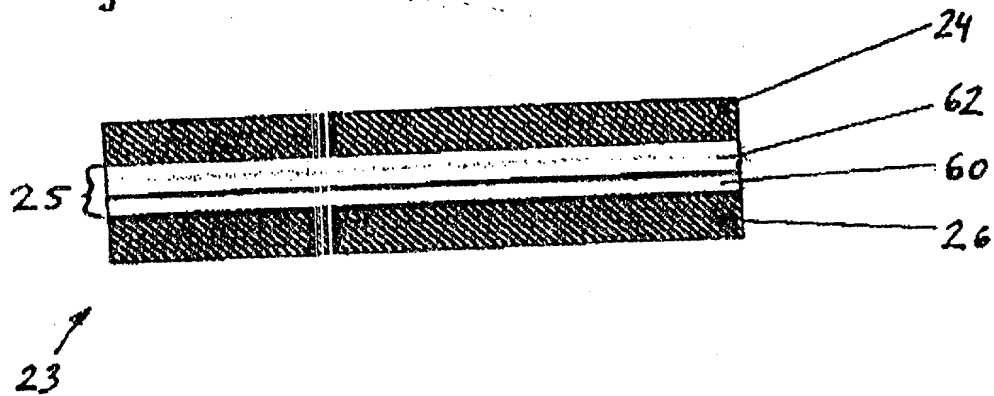


FIG.3

Fig. 4





Attorney Docket No.
AZ.3025

COMBINED DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR PATENT APPLICATION

As below named inventors, we hereby declare that:

Our residences, post office addresses and citizenships are as stated below next to our names; we believe we are the original, first inventors or original, first and joint inventors of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought of the invention entitled:

APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR COATING AN OPTICALLY READABLE DATA CARRIER
the specification of which,

_____ is attached hereto;

~~XX~~ was filed on 15 June 2000 as International Application No. PCT/EP00/05515 and is amended herewith.

We hereby state that we have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

We acknowledge the duty to disclose all information known by us to be material to the patentability of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56.

We hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

Prior Foreign Application(s):

Priority
Claimed:

199 27 515.7	Germany	16 June 1999	XX
100 29 399.9	Germany	15 June 2000	XX
(Number)	(Country)	(Day/Month/Year Filed)	Yes No

We hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below:

(Application Number)

(Filing Date)

We hereby appoint attorney Robert W. Becker, Reg. No. 26,255, to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith. Address all telephone calls to (505) 286-3511. Address all correspondence to ROBERT W. BECKER & ASSOCIATES, 11896 N. Highway 14, Suite B, Tijeras, New Mexico 87059.

We hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

Full name of first inventor: Björn Liedtke

Inventor's signature Björn Liedtke Date: 08.01.02
Residence: Nockherstrasse 56, D-81541 München, Germany DEX
Citizenship: German
Post Office Address: Same as Above

2-00
Full name of second inventor: Joachim Gordt

Inventor's signature *Joachim Gordt* Date: 08.01.02
Residence: Im Ziegelfeld 27, D-75447 Sternenfels, Germany DEX
Citizenship: German
Post Office Address: Same as Above

3-00
Full name of third inventor: Ulrich Speer

Inventor's signature *Ulrich Speer* Date: 08.01.02
Residence: Hagäckerweg 8, D-71144 Steinenbronn, Germany
Citizenship: German Leiningsstraße 6-2 D-75239 Eisingen DEX
Post Office Address: Same as Above

4-00
Full name of fourth inventor: James Wise

Inventor's signature *James S. Wise* Date: 08.01.02
Residence: Flat 12 A, Thai Wah Bldg., 262 Lockhart Rd., Wan Chai, Hong Kong SAR HKX
Citizenship: German
Post Office Address: Same as Above

5-00
Full name of fifth inventor: Hans-Gerd Esser

Inventor's signature *Hans-Gerd Esser* Date: 08.01.02
Residence: Max-von-Laue-Strasse 2, D-75015 Bretten Germany DEX
Citizenship: German
Post Office Address: Same as Above